

THE ISNEG LIFE CYCLE

149

The laziness of the Isneg man has become almost proverbial in Apayaw; he resents it of course, but what can be done about it? The Isneg are living in one of the richest provinces of the Philippines agriculturally, and nevertheless these last years, famine has desolated the land at every turn. 461 731 261°

Once while at Alumani, I went to visit a few friends: three of them, the father and his two sturdy sons, the older one a widower, the younger one a bachelor, were living together in a house surrounded by the most fertile fields imaginable; and still they complained and said that they were starving to death, because there were no women to till the soil. 251 157

The year 1928 was a lean one almost all over the province, but Karagawan men preferred to squat down in their houses and feed on the flowers of the coconut tree rather than come to Kabugaw and earn a ganta (three liters) of rice a day by doing work that could easily be done by boys of twelve years of age: this work was too hard for them.

About the same time I had to go to Bayag, which is some forty miles distant from Kabugaw, a two days' walk. I sent my carriers one day ahead and gave them rations of rice for two days, in order to preclude any excuse for their not reaching their destination at least at the same time as myself. The next day I met the fellows about noon, sitting in a little hut some ten miles from home and cooking their last meal but one. Having rice they did not care for anything else. They had passed a day and a half walking ten miles, cooking rice, chewing betel nut, and . . . resting.

I could adduce a score of examples like this, all from personal experience. But after all why should we blame the Isneg for it? They were reared in years of plenty, when the smallest amount of work brought the largest possible returns; at the beginning of the lean years they consumed all the rice that had been hoarded up for years; and now the hard times have come: when a tree has been growing in a slanting direction for several years, can you make it lean to the other side in its old age? The Bontok Igorot is industrious and always ready to handle a job that may bring him some money; but he is living among rocks and cliffs, where even weeds and grasses refuse to thrive. The Isneg on the contrary are living in an exceedingly fertile country: up to recent times their district was closed to the outside world for lack of roads, and this prevented them from conducting active trade on any large scale and from selling the surplus 461 251 433 487 152

162

MORICE VANOVERBERGH

577

574

261

you commit regrettable deeds. Gluttony is condemned by everybody; never keep all the best viands for yourself alone, and be careful not to eat to excess.

577

626

521

152

"Beware of talking about your neighbor's defects in his absence (*maglibá*; in Iloko, *aglibák* means "to hide, to conceal, not to confess, not to manifest"); it may come to his ears; and in such a case, just imagine how he will feel about it. Do you expect him to forgive you without more ado, and to continue his friendly relations with you?

"Do not be a talebearer; such men are the curse of the community: most quarrels take their origin in this vice. Anyone who is known to be addicted to it, at once loses all consideration among decent men, and his company is avoided as much as possible.

"Never boast about your virtues, your possessions, your actions, except on the occasion of a *sáy-ám* sacrifice, when every brave Isneg should recount his glorious deeds for the edification of youth. A man who is puffed up with self-conceit and vainglory is despised by all. The ignorant may perhaps respect him or rather be afraid of him, but the general public scorns him. You know what it means to be called *makiddyaw* (proud) or *napuñláu* (braggart); so never give occasion to anybody to fling such an epithet at your head.

"Beware of being jealous of your neighbor's prosperity or good luck. If fate or the spirits have been less generous to you, that is no reason for being envious of others who are more fortunate than yourself. Ambition is good, jealousy is bad".

2. Motives Proposed to Young

000

Now I shall discard my rôle of Isneg moralist, and say a few words about the motives that are proposed to the youngsters. A good many points have already been hinted at in the preceding treatment of the Isneg moral code, so here I shall merely resume and complete or elucidate my former statements.

626

It should be said in general that, except when referring to religious, magical or superstitious practices as such, and to the duty of head-hunting, no religious or supernatural motives are proposed to the children in order to get them to obey the moral law, nor are the children ever taught to expect rewards or punishments from supernatural beings. One might perhaps be inclined to accept a few other cases as possible exceptions, for instance that of scoffers referred to above; but it should be remembered that even in such cases, the Isneg never mention directly the intervention of any supernatural beings.

THE ISNEG FARMER

353

Isneg reapers usually provide themselves with amulets, which they place in their *túput* (pouch) tied around the waist. The following are noteworthy: 243
182

Leaves of the *banítug*, a kind of forest tree with smooth leaves and white flowers, whose fruits and young leaves are edible. They prevent the bearer from feeling the pangs of hunger.

Katálin: a herbaceous vine with thick leaves, growing on the banks of rivers.

Palamían: a low herb, found almost anywhere.

Other amulets may be placed on the *bañibāñ* (heap of rice) in the *sixáy*:

Añimōy: A low herb, with small leaves and very hairy fruits, found all over the district.

Basáñal: A creeping herb, mentioned among the amulets of the *aligmamán*-basket.

Binóag: A low herb with white flowers, growing in forests.

Iput butit (literally: rat's tail): A grass, some two feet tall, probably a species of *Setaria*,⁶² found almost anywhere. It keeps the rats from playing havoc with the palay.

Xippatippaw: Also mentioned among the *aligmamán* amulets. This herb is placed somewhere in the hearth, before the *bañibāñ* has attained a considerable size.

Panápil: A low herb with round leaves, growing all over the district.

Thorns of the *sumí*-, a plant mentioned before. It bears seeds that point downwards (hence its name: "turned the wrong way").

A *tutúxan*, a kind of round red bead, must be placed under the *sixáy*-hut and covered with a stone.

The following amulets prevent the people from consuming a large amount of rice, when taking their meals at harvesting time: 261
189

Anampát: A creeping herb growing along brooks. It resembles the Bermuda grass, but its leaves are larger and greener. The Isneg wrap it in a piece of cloth and tie it around the *bakóba*- (calabash for storing *baggát*, "husked rice") or around the neck of a jar that contains the rice.

Tagalobná- (Bayag pronunciation): A herb, some six inches tall, with small leaves, found almost anywhere. This also is placed on the receptacle for rice.

⁶² The Italian millet belongs to the same genus.

261 The *anibgán*, a herbaceous vine with small leaves, growing all over
789 the district, is used as an amulet of the new rice pounded during the
harvest.

252 And this leads us to the question of the *inixúbān* or roasted immature
rice.

New rice is never pounded in the regular way, before reaping has
been going on for several days and before *inixúbān* has been partaken
of; and in many cases *inixúbān* is the only new rice that is eaten until
the end of the harvest. It is of so much importance that reaping time
is often referred to by the Isneg as the time of the *inixúbān*. At the
same time, the natives consider the *inixúbān* as a kind of dainty:
everybody, the adult as well as the child, eagerly awaits the season in
which he may indulge in the roasting and eating of new rice, almost
in picnic fashion.

The immature paddy and the detached ears and branches of ears
that were gathered by the reapers in their *arin*-basket (tied at their
girdle), and have been stored in the *patuxáw*-basket (in the hut), form
the bulk of the palay used for roasting. To these are added all *battá*-
(bundles) that were not sufficiently ripe to be exposed to the sun and
stored up with the rest. All these are known collectively as *xáput*,
before the roasting, and *inixúbān*, afterwards.

To prepare *inixúbān* or to *manixub*, as the Isneg call it, the following
things are needed: fire, which can always be got from the hearth,
inside the *sirāy*, a certain amount of fuel, a *taddó*, and two *duwég*.

The fuel used at this juncture, invariably consists of *pattár*: dry
canes of *bassáw* (bamboo grass, *Miscanthus sinensis*, Andr.) or of
sial (*Saccharum spontaneum*, L.). Neither wood, nor any other
material is allowed for the purpose.

The *taddó* is a kind of square basket, woven very clumsily from
splints of green bamboo. It serves as a receptacle for the paddy that
is held over the fire.

The *duwég* are two forked sticks, used for manipulating the *taddó*.

When the *xáput* has been roasted sufficiently, it is placed in a mortar
(*altón*) and pounded with a pestle (*alló*). The first time the *altón* or
mortar is used for pounding *inixúbān*, it must be provided all around
with *takkág*-amulets (schizaeaceous ferns mentioned before). Besides,
it is advisable to mix another amulet with the rice, namely the
ama-ba-nát, which is a low herb and grows in forests.

Pounding is followed by winnowing (*magsáp*). When *inixúbān* is
winnowed for the first time, the Isneg take some *do-ráu* (straw, what